



Weeding is an ongoing garden chore, but the goal is to make it as easy as it possibly can be.

Over a couple of seasons, you can just about rid your garden of weeds as long as you have a plan.

Like any other part of life, regular maintenance comes with the territory. Seeds fight to germinate and weeds have perfected their resilience to adverse conditions, but just as we do with cleaning the house or the car, we can come up with better methods for gaining some control.

The most important rule of dealing with weeds is not to let any that are present flower and go to seed.

Once loose in your garden, weed seeds will deposit everywhere, traveling by wind, breeze, rain, birds and even foot traffic. You'll be seeing the offspring of one weed for many seasons. The good news is that pulling that one weed before it flowers and produces seeds will lessen the number of future weeds by a huge amount.

Getting ahead of the problem – The sooner you attack a weed problem in the spring the more success you'll have.

- **Preen or corn gluten as a pre-emergent.** Pre-emergents will gain you a lot of ground later on. Making sure that seeds don't germinate is the job of the pre-emergent. Bear in mind that when you use it, you'll be feeding any plant that already has roots even if they are barely visible. Pre-emergents can't tell the difference between a weed and a perennial flower. If you're going to seed the lawn or directly sow flower or vegetable seeds, don't use a pre-emergent!

- **Mulch** has long been the method of choice for discouraging weed growth between shrubs and perennials in garden beds. Obviously, you can't use it everywhere, but it will certainly help to cut down on the amount of weeding you see in your future. Layer newspaper under mulch when first putting it down and you'll create a great barrier that's biodegradable.
- **Whenever you dig around or till the soil, you're setting some seeds up for success!** Have you ever noticed how quickly new weed seedlings sprout after you've put in a new perennial or shrub? Or after you've tilled a new garden bed?
- When tilling or digging in an area you'll bring seeds waiting to germinate up to the surface. Go ahead and till. Wait until weed seedlings are up (about a week), and then till again. You can stop here or even do it again, thereby lessening the number of weeds in the area by a lot.
- After tilling, put down several layers of newspaper over the area. After about a week you should have successfully left weed seedling with no way to grow.
- **Use edging.** After all your efforts to rid the area of weeds put in edging. It will really help to keep unwanted weed roots from creeping into your planting area.
- **Jump on weed seedlings right away!** Those tiny weeds can easily be unearthed with a hoe. The roots are barely in the ground so just disturb the top inch of soil and you'll get rid of plenty of weeds. This takes hardly any time and doesn't involve bending, kneeling or contorting your body in strange ways.
- **Think about Weeds every chance you get.** You've just boiled some potatoes. Take that water straight out to your path or sidewalk and dump it on some weeds. Just finished a jar of pickles? Dump it out on some weeds. Happened to pick up a bottle of white vinegar? Dump it on some weeds. You get the idea.
- **Groundcovers work!** Groundcovers compete with weeds for space and nutrients. Groundcover plants are thickly growing plants that can create a very dense mat of foliage in some cases. Weeds are much less likely to proliferate with groundcovers jealously guarding their own space. Keep groundcovers healthy by trimming when necessary.
- **But I already have weeds everywhere! What do I do? Recognize that weeds are clever, but you're smarter.**

Seeds looking to germinate are expert at hiding until the conditions are right for springing into action. As soon as sunlight and moisture hit them when they're at the right depth in the garden, sprout they will.

- **When you have to pull established weeds.** This chore is definitely easier after a rain or after you sprinkle the area. Weeds pull out much more easily when soil is damp and soft. Remember, each one you pull will get rid of many future generations.
- **When using a hoe,** get a stirrup or collinear hoe. Traditional hoes do half the work. Make this job as easy as possible by getting a stirrup hoe (it has a "loop" on the bottom or a collinear hoe (it has a straight edge on the bottom). Both are meant to push and pull just under the soil surface where roots are. Traditional hoes chop at the ground and produce a lot of hit or miss results. If you already have a traditional hoe and want to stick with it, try using a push/pull method instead of a chopping motion.
- **Grass and weeds in perennial beds,** between shrubs or on and near pathways. Burnout II makes the prospect of this job much easier to deal with. Spray between plants leaving the grass to the lawn.
- **Change your perspective.** Is it a weed? Some weeds are native plants. If a volunteer plant arrives in your yard, and you aren't sure you really dislike it, it may be worth investigating. While one person is killing moss another is trying to establish a moss area.
- **Lawn weeds.** Lawn weeds present their own set of challenges. The first step is to fix the cultural issues in your lawn and weeds will barely be a problem. Correct the pH of your lawn soil. Lawn grasses like a pH of about 6-6.5. This is achieved by either bringing the pH up or down depending on the outcome of a pH test. You'll make your lawn grass very happy if you let it stay at 2.5-3 inches in height and not any shorter. This shades out weed seedlings just as a ground cover would. Take care of these two items and you'll be much further ahead in the battle with weeds.